

WATERTOWN PLANNING BOARD

DATE: July 12, 2017 PLACE: Town Council Chamber TIME: 7:00 PM COMMENCED: 7:00 PM

PURPOSE OF MEETING: Regular Monthly Meeting

PRESENT: John Hawes, Chairman; Payson Whitney; Jeff Brown; Janet Buck; Gary Shaw
Steve Magoon, Director; Ingrid Marchesano, Clerk to the Board; Gideon Schreiber, Senior Planner

AMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS

Jeff Brown motioned to approve Minutes of 7/13/16, 7/18/16 & 6/14/17 meetings.

Janet Buck seconded the motion.

VOTE: 5-0 In favor

CASES PENDING

485, 615-1, 617 Arsenal Street; BP Arsenal Group, LLC – **Site Plan Review** - PB-2017-03

Jeff Heidelberg, Arsenal Yards, this is a Phase II of the project, requesting Amendment of the Master Plan Special Permit to change Building B from 79 residential units to a 150 room hotel. With parking above grade and a below grade garage, first floor retail, streetscape construction and pedestrian and bicycle connections. The structure is adjacent to Harvard Vanguard and Arsenal Street. Parking spaces will remain open for Building A and Arsenal Park. Traffic study was completed as part of the change by Vanasse Associates. And reviewed by the town consultant World Tech.

Mark Eclipse, there are 3 main components of the design. Ground floor façade consists of bricks similar to existing buildings. Upper floors will have metal panels with balconies for hotel use. Outdoor space for hotel will be on second floor, next to dining room. Stairwell from the garage is very transparent. Precast panel garage in Somerville is shown as a sample. This design does not feel like any other building. Number of colors has been simplified,

Chris Jones, Carol Johnson landscape architect, the design is consistent with the site. Location is strategic to absorb grade plantings on Arsenal Street and to incorporate tree plantings. The sidewalk is 6 feet wide and we are proposing much wider sidewalk.

Gideon Schreiber, Arsenal Yards Master Plan was approved on January 11, 2017. The project comprises approximately 374,000 square feet and up to 503 residential units within 7 buildings. A request has been made under the Phase 2 to modify 79 residential units with a hotel. A community meeting on 5/31/2017 was well attended. Comments focused on the change from residential to hotel use and loss of affordable units. The brick color of the new building design was not liked. The staff reviewed the request and determined that this is a minor change. 79 residential units will change to 150 hotel rooms, retail and restaurant and attached garage. This phase will also include landscaping and hardscape around the buildings, a two-way cycle track connecting from Arsenal Street to Arsenal Park. The design is a contrast to the historic structures. This is a positive improvement, traffic circulation is better. Through easement has to be updated and approved by the Town Council. This will also allow further improvements along the corridor. The approved offsite transportation mitigation includes \$2,059,000 for items addressed in the mitigation package including traffic signal upgrades, pavement striping and widening, and signal retiming. Petitioner agrees to contribute \$810,000 toward sewer line repairs and town wide study. I-cubed will have impact on how and what mitigation will be completed. Funds will be reassigned at the discretion of the Town.

Shuttle service will be coordinated with TMA. Utility services are consistent with Master Plan. LEED certifiable requirements are met. We have met with Gamble Associates and the petitioner and the plans have been updated accordingly. Building entrances will be added on Arsenal Street. The pedestrian connection between the Arsenal Street corridor and the Charles River will be reinforced. A buffer will be included along the unlandscaped path. Exterior column on northeast corner will be removed. Second floor terrace facing Arsenal Street will include landscaping. Traffic peer review was reviewed by traffic town consultant World Tech. There are additional 35 trips during peak hours. Conditions include care share and charging stations and additional condition the review by DCD&P staff and the town consultant.

Gary Shaw, there are issues with impact of the project. Trips will increase but parking does not.

Janet Buck, I am curious about traffic generated by residential units versus hotel guests. Who will be staying at the hotel, business visitors or tourists? How often do you get people who will use taxis instead of bringing their cars?

Jeff Heidelberg, a strong office component will allow for business visitors and tourists. A study that was done in June 2014 had negative 54 cars. People are coming for meetings without cars.

Bill McQuillan, the use will be similar to the new Marriott that is across the street. 20% of the rooms will be suites, 80% will be smaller rooms.

Jeff Brown, this is a change of use before construction starts, why from apartments to hotel?

Jeff Heidelberg, we already have apartments on the site, there is a demand for a hotel. The entrance is located at the corner away from Arsenal Street.

John Hawes, the plans are not showing clearly where the entrance will be.

Bill McQuillan, we are proposing retail on the first floor of the hotel.

Payson Whitney, the traffic estimate is very conservative.

Janet Buck, letters have been received from residents, Arsenal Street has always been major commercial corridor, the change is consistent with such use. I have a major objection to the color palate, there are too many different colors and materials. There needs to be reference to the existing historic buildings.

John Hawes, how does the hotel impact the creation of the new residential area? It will be a true mixed use.

Bill McQuillan, changes have been made in the last few days. Units were taken from the top floors, second floor outdoor space was created, and red panels were taken off. We have worked with Gamble Associates for several years. We have benefitted from feedbacks, this is not the last of the changes.

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Eric Brown, final paint color selection will be made in the field, we are looking for warm palate. We do agree with David Gamble.

John Hawes, there is a strong brick context/statement at the neighboring Athena campus. The hotel could have much redder façade, anchoring this corner, more red brick should be included.

Bill McQuillan, enough of red brick is on the site already, we will not use it on the hotel.

Payson Whitney, the east side is broken up, west side consists of a long wall, can some symbology of the Arsenal be taken in? What is considered minor change?

Gideon Schreiber, standard process is to review. Substantial project determination is made at staff level.

Steve Magoon, if this was part of the original proposal, this will benefit the Town, looking from positive perspective. Can we see samples of the corrugated metal?

Mark Eclipse, it is a light color corrugated metal.

John Hawes, more detail is needed in future phases, we need to see samples of materials.

Bill McQuillan, 80% of the garage is blocked by Harvard Vanguard building. The new design is faithful to the original design presented last year.

Payson Whitney, there is a planter near the drop-off tunnel, this is a major area that needs to be looked at. The tunnel needs to be well lit, the flag pole should stay.

Gary Shaw, when someone is dropped-off, where does the vehicle go? Is the light source on second floor visible? Our consultant Gamble Associates has done good job addressing our concerns. I want the same from our traffic consultant. I do not want to design the building, this is a design change.

John Hawes, we have a choice, we can add a condition or add additional review by David Gamble and the staff.

Bill McQuillan, many changes have been made in the last few days. We are happy to meet with David Gamble and the staff. We would like the Planning Board to vote tonight.

Gary Shaw, David Gamble being the Towns/Boards representative should meet with the developer.

Steve Magoon, if the Board prefers this process, we will certainly follow-up. DCD&P can incorporate David Gamble into the process to make sure that the conditions are met.

Bill McQuillan, a certification is required by the lender. We have first class architects, but if the Boards that, we will do it. We have 2 other buildings that are complete and were built with full approval of the Board.

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John Hawes, the building inspector reviews the plans, looking for different details. We are not asking the developer to come back.

Jeff Heidelberg, changes were made since the Master Plan approval.

Mark Eclipse, yes, changes were made since the Master Plan approval. All ground floors became brick. Red was introduced as accent. Balconies were added at the corners, terrace was added later.

Mark Sideris, Town Council President, change from residential to hotel use will be beneficial to the Town. Traffic study done at the Marriott side shows to be less significant. This is a change for the better, this is a key to make it successful project.

Elodia Thomas, 67 Marion Road, I loved the design angles of the first building. The building should stand out not blend in, I am disappointed with this design.

John, Main Street, this change will be beneficial to the town's economy. I use points in hotels.

Bob Lauricella, Garfield Street, I have sent a letter to the Board regarding this project.

Thomas, Arsenal Court, hotel would be great, the design is much improved, the second story outdoor space is attractive.

Dan Campagna, 145 Warren Street, as a member of the carpenters union, I am hoping that the developer will hire locals that would love to build it.

Jeff Brown motioned to grant the Arsenal Yards Master Plan Phase 2 Site Plan Approval with the following conditions, based on the findings that this Phase is in accordance with Watertown Zoning Ordinance §5.18 (RMUD) to implement the second Phase in the redevelopment of approximately 23 acres for a mixed use proposal that includes a mix of Residential, Commercial, Retail and Restaurant Uses

Payson Whitney seconded the motion.

Vote: 5-0 In favor.

Chairman John Hawes stated that the August 9, 2017 meeting has been cancelled and adjourned tonight's meeting at 9:05 PM.

MEETING ADJOURNED: 9:05 PM MINUTES APPROVED: _____
For more detailed Minutes see the DVD dated 7/12/17 which is available in the DCDP office.